

the latter skims along just above his head, like a flash of lightning throws his bola above the bird, which, entangled in the cord, falls and becomes his prey. The captured bird is fastened by a cord around the wings and placed on the platform of the bower among the other victims of this sport. As far as I could ascertain, the natives make no peculiar use of the birds, and the only prize of the sport seems to be the possession of the greatest number of these birds, which is considered as a privilege and attribute of chieftainship. One of the chiefs was bent on getting sixty Frigate-birds alive, and required only one dozen to make up the number, thirty having been captured for him by one bird-catcher and eighteen by another.

If I find time I will give you a further account of this peculiar mode of catching birds ; but I must finish now, as my attention is absorbed by the view of the glorious mountainous coast of the Solomon Islands, along which we are now steaming, and which is, of course, a country of great promise to a naturalist.

XIX.—*Notes on a Collection of Birds from the Marquesas Islands.* By H. B. TRISTRAM, F.R.S.

I HAVE lately received a jar of birds from the Marquesas Islands in spirits ; and so little is known of the avifauna of that the most distant group of the Pacific, that a few remarks on this collection may have some interest for my brother ornithologists.

The collection contains twenty-nine specimens of fourteen species, most of them well known as natives of these islands. Of the fourteen only four are land-birds ; and the rare and curious Pigeons, *Ptilopus mercieri*, *Serresius galeatus*, and *Caloenas rubescens*, are, I regret to say, not represented.

1. *CORIPHILUS SMARAGDINUS*, Hombr. & Jacq.

There are four specimens of this gorgeous little Parrot. Unfortunately, as comparison with a few skins in my collection shows, their sojourn for nine months in a jar of spirits

has dimmed the lustre of their plumage. Three of the specimens exactly agree with my own and with those I have examined at Leiden and in the British Museum, in having the underparts spotted and mottled, as well as the broad patch on the inner webs of the tail-feathers. But these spots and patches are (I presume, from the effects of the spirit) ochreous yellow instead of white. In all these specimens the light colour varies much in extent. In one the throat, cheeks, and ear-coverts are buff, and the whole breast and abdomen are spotted with buff, excepting a broad belt of dark blue across the breast. In the second specimen this belt is much broader; in the third the throat, cheeks, and ear-coverts only are spotted, and the under surface is dark blue, excepting the abdomen, which is spotted. The fourth specimen, evidently a very adult bird, has the whole under surface dark blue, without a vestige of white or buff, excepting on the rectrices, the inner webs of which, except the outer pair, are light-coloured. The flanks are of a lighter and brighter blue, like the wings. I cannot find that any specimen has been yet recorded in this evidently adult state of plumage.

I have assumed that the buff would, in a natural state, be white; yet it is curious that various other white or partially white-coloured birds in the same jar, as *Pomarea* and *Gygis*, have not been in the slightest degree affected by the spirit. It may be that these aberrant birds belong to a distinct species from some particular island. Unfortunately, my correspondent has sailed for Europe, and I have not been able to ascertain on which island of the group the collection was made.

2. *TATARE LONGIROSTRIS* (Gm.).

The two adult specimens of this bird are identical with specimens in my collection from Tahiti and Huaheine. There are also two very interesting specimens, nestlings in the first plumage, in different stages, but both having lost all traces of the down. They show a remarkable contrast to the early plumage of the *Sylviidæ*, being in coloration and markings precisely similar to the adult; in fact, at first sight, they might pass for a pygmy species.

3. POMAREA NIGRA. (Sparrm.).

Of this there are three specimens, all in distinct states of plumage:—one male, uniform jet-black; two female, black, with snow-white tail, and remiges and secondaries pure white, with brownish black tips to the former; and one younger bird, with the upper surface and tail umber-brown, the throat and breast lighter, and the abdomen and inner webs of the secondaries whitish buff.

4. PTILOPUS DUPETITHOUARSI (Neboux).

Of this, the only Pigeon in the collection, there are two specimens, neither of them in very good plumage.

5. CHARADRIUS FULVUS, Gm.

Two specimens in winter plumage.

6. ARDEA SACRA, Gm.

Two specimens, both in pure black plumage.

+ 7. NUMENIUS FEMORALIS, Peale.

There is one fine specimen of this bird, showing very conspicuously the long fine hairs terminating the tibial feathers, some of them more than an inch long, from which Peale first named it. I cannot help thinking that the *Numenius tahitiensis* of Gmelin is identical. No type specimen can be traced; indeed I cannot find that a specimen claiming to be *N. tahitiensis* exists in any museum. The peculiar termination of the tibial plumes probably escaped the notice of the early writers; but their description of the plumage, and especially the chestnut rump, well agrees with Peale's bird. It has not hitherto been reported from the Marquesas; and we should hardly expect to find a distinct species of a bird of such powers of flight in an island intervening between the Marquesas and the Low Islands, whence the type of *N. femoralis* was originally described.

+ 8. TOTANUS INCANUS (Gm.).

Two specimens, one in winter plumage, the other rapidly assuming the breeding-dress.

+ 9. GYGIS CANDIDA, Forst.

One specimen.

10. *GYGIS MICRORHYNCHA*, Saunders.

There is also one specimen of this scarce and peculiar species. On taking the two birds out of the spirit, I was struck by the contrast in the shape of the bill, and especially by that of *G. candida* being very much more expanded at the base. This does not appear in the dried specimens. The bill of *G. microrhyncha*, on the contrary, is compressed at the base, and terminates sharply and abruptly. The quills of the larger species are very distinctly black, while those of the other are pure white before being dried.

+11. *STERNA FULIGINOSA*, Gm.

Two specimens, nestlings, in different stages of plumage, the first not having lost the down, with the curious black and white barrings all across the plumage, both above and below. The second is more advanced, with the same chequering or barring still retained on the whole plumage.

12. *ANOUS STOLIDUS*, L.

One specimen, not fully adult, and with traces of the nestling-plumage still remaining.

13. *ANOUS CÆRULEUS*, Bennett.

Two adult specimens of this rare and beautiful miniature Tern, of a uniform sooty black, rather lighter on the head. It is a mere pygmy, even when compared with our least Tern, and one third less in size than the *Anous cinereus*, Gould, with which it has sometimes been confounded.

14. *PROCELLARIA MACGILLIVRAYI*, G. R. Gray.

A small Petrel, exactly corresponding in all respects to *P. bulweri*, excepting that the bill is thicker at the base, and that the colour is more uniformly black, without any tendency to sooty brown on the wings. One adult specimen.

N.B. I have been kindly assisted by Mr. Howard Saunders in the determination of the Terns.

XX.—*On the proper Generic Designation of the European Woodpeckers.* By HENRY T. WHARTON, M.A., F.Z.S.

At the present day the original Linnæan genus *Picus* consists of at least two hundred and eighty species; and for these very nearly one hundred and fifty distinct generic names have been proposed. Waiving the question of how far the genus requires generic subdivision at all, it is obvious from this fact alone that in a redistribution of the group a considerable sifting of the results of what Dr. Hartlaub has so happily called the “*furor genericus*” is of peremptory necessity.

Linnæus himself was acquainted with but twenty-one species referable to his genus *Picus*; of these, *P. passerinus* has never been satisfactorily identified (*cf.* Sundevall, *Consp. Av. Picin.* p. 34), *P. aurantius* is admitted to be the female of *P. bengalensis*, and *P. semirostris* is named from a mutilated specimen of *P. viridis*; so that only eighteen well-defined species were really known to him.

The object of the present paper is to show the species which, according to the Stricklandian code, should be legally regarded as the type of the Linnæan genus *Picus*; and in this consideration it is only necessary to refer to the eight well-marked European species.

Now, in an inquiry of this kind no use whatever can be made of the popular “argument from authority.” The family Picidæ has been fortunate in obtaining three admirable monographers. But of these, Malherbe (*Monogr. des Picidéés*, 1859–62) restricted the genus *Picus* to the Spotted Woodpeckers; Cabanis and Heine (*Mus. Hein.* iv. 2, p. 30, note, 1863) would apparently confine it to the Green Woodpeckers; while Sundevall (*l. c.* 1866) used the name for all the members of the family which were distinguished “*rectricibus firmioribus*.” And among those who have not particularly in a single work confined their attention to this family alone, opinion has been equally diversified. For instance, Swainson (*Classif. Birds*, ii. p. 306, 1841) took the type of the genus to be *P. robustus*, a species undescribed by Linnæus; George R. Gray regarded at one time (*List of the*